1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

V. ART

Sculpture and Painting

532 In the field of native art the Tukuna have not only preserved the traditions of
517 their ancestors but have even developed them. Above all, the Tukuna have a curious bent toward sculpture. An Indian, seeing a large, misshapen tree trunk floating near the edge of a lake, will repair to his canoe, lay hands on his hatchet, and give the log the outlines of an enormous alligator. Observing a rounded termites' nest hanging from a high branch bent over the igapó, he will stop, climb up with his machete, and, with perilous acrobatics, transform it into the horrid grimace of a demon. Any knot on a thick tree trunk within reach of his hands invariably receives similar treatment. A Tukuna rubber gatherer I once saw had decorated his smoking hearth with plastic figures of animals. (See p. 48.)

The sculptured figures of men and women (pl. 9, *b*) made of muirapiranga, an extremely heavy wood, toys for children, and so forth, are not very artistic; but one finds among the representations of animals (pl. 9, *c*, *d*) very handsome works of art, starting with small stools in the form of turtles or bats. The Tukuna taste for sculpture, however, is displayed more strikingly in two classes of objects: dance staves and necklaces of figurines from tucumã palm nuts.

The dance staves (dɔ:'pa), made of a light, white wood and from one to one and
532 a half meters long, are used at ceremonies, the same staff never being used on two
293 occasions. They are carried over the left shoulder; the lower end generally has a hook or button from which is suspended a small drum to be struck with the right hand. The upper part of the staff, which rests on the shoulder, has usually four planed surfaces and is decorated by one or more carved figures, interspersed with geometric designs, the whole being painted in bright colors (pl. 14, *a–f*).

The figurines of the necklaces are carved of tucumã palm nuts (*Astrocaryum*
532 sp.), generally tucumã piranga, but sometimes ordinary tucumã or anajú nuts
301 (*Maximiliana regia*) are used. The first two have a surface of brilliant jet, the third is a clear, brown color. The figures are of men firing with a shotgun, women with children, a girl in the puberty-ceremony costume, pairs of dancers, or an infinity of animals, from the crab louse (*úra*) to the jaguar. These little figurines, separated only by rows of seeds or glass beads, make very striking necklaces (pl. 13).

In the Igarapé de São Jeronymo there are a brother and sister, Flavio pi'ë and
532 Raimunda ç'kirane, thirty and thirty-five years old, respectively, who are the best
463 artists in this line. Their products are sought by neighboring Indians and by those of other igarapés, where their motifs are later imitated. Raimunda does not limit herself to copying live models; she showed me a goodly number of figurines which were pure fantasy, and others which she "saw in a dream." For his part, pi'ë likes to reproduce motifs seen in prints of civilized origin. Thus, he carved a dragon, the trade-mark of a certain marketed product, and the United States eagle, complete with the shield of stars and stripes on its breast.

531 The Tukuna produce far less painting than sculpture, partly because of their extremely primitive technique, for the Tukuna have not yet invented or adopted